

B. 103 1703. *Alexander*
The Worship of G O D in the Beauty
of Holiness: 6547

A
SERMON

Preach'd in the Parish-Church

O F

ISLELWORTH, Middlesex;

AT THE

First Opening of it after the Rebuilding;
on *Quadragesima Sunday*, March the
2d, 1706. *K*

Psal. 96. Part of Ver. 9.

O worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness.

By ROBERT GERY, Vicar of *Islington, &c.*

Publish'd at the Request of the Trustees for the Re-
building the said Church.

L O N D O N:

Printed by *H. Hills*, in *Black-fryars*, near the Water-
side. For the Benefit of the Poor. *65*

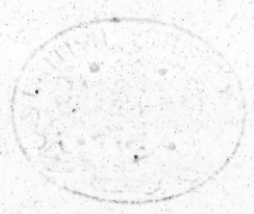


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Psal. 96. Part of Ver. 9.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness.

1. **T**HIS Psalm, tho' it have no Title or Inscription in the Hebrew to declare its Author, yet we may be certain is of the Royal Prophet *David's* Composure; for in *1 Chron. 16. ver. 7, 8. 23. 29.* we find this amongst some others deliver'd by him into the Hand of *Asaph* and his Brethren, to be sung on that solemn day of Rejoycing, when the Ark of God's Presence was brought up from the House of *Obed-Edom* to the Royal City; and 'tis most probable it was first made on that occasion. And if the Greek Inscription added by the *LXX*, be of any weight, it was again us'd by *Esdra*s at the Dedication of the Second Temple, built by *Zorobabel* after the return of the Children of *Israel* from the *Babylonish* Captivity, as most proper and suitable for that Solemnity.

2. For in this Divine Hym, the devout and inspir'd Author first offers up Praises and Thanksgivings to God for the abundance of his Gifts and Graces, with an acknowledgment of his universal Sovereignty and Dominion; then calls upon all People to solemnize his Worship; and concludes with Prophetical Predictions of the Messiah, when all Nations shall come in to the Worship of the True God the Creator, and to the acknowledgment of his Son Christ Jesus the Mediator and Redeemer of Men.

3. The Text may be consider'd with respect to both Dispensations; and concerns us now under the Gospel, as well as it did the Children of *Israel* under the Law, to whom it was first deliver'd; and it consists of Two Parts.

I. A necessary Duty ; *Worship the Lord.*

II. Direction for the true performance of it ; *In the Beauty of Holiness.*

In the Duty we may consider these two ; the Act, and the Object. The Act, *Worship* : The Object of that *Worship, The Lord Jehovah.*

4. I. The Act, *Worship.*

The Original Word in its proper Sense and Meaning, signifies to bend forward, and bow down the Face to the Ground, in token of Submission and Subjection, according to the Custom of the Eastern Nations ; who made Obedience to their Kings, and paid their Worship to the Gods by Prostration of their Bodies. This being the customary Rite of Adoration, the Sacred Penmen apply it to signify Worship in general, therein comprehending both the External and Visible Worship of God, which we pay with our Bodies, when we come into his Courts, and appear before him in his Presence ; and also the Internal and Invisible Worship, which consists in the humble desires of the Mind, in the devout Affections of the Soul ; For these ought not to be separated the one from the other ; the outward Worship without the inward, is more Pageantry and Hypocrisie, the Inward without the Outward is not only defective, but rude and scandalous, and of evil Example ; both together make up that compleat and consummate Worship that is due to the great Jehovah.

5. II. The Object of our Worship, *The Lord.* The Lord that made us, and gave us our Being ; the Lord that sustains and preserves us, affords us a daily Supply of all things necessary to this present Life. *He giveth Life and Breath, and all things ; he giveth Rain from Hea-*

*even and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and
and Gladness. [Acts 17. 25. 14. 17.]* The Lord and
Governour of the World, who by his Providence sup-
ports this outward Frame of things, preserving the Har-
mony thereof, which otherwise would soon be dissol-
ved, and fall to pieces through the Strife of jarring Ele-
ments ; who defends us from many Dangers and Ca-
sualties which might befall us, watching over us both *in
our goings out and our comings in ; [Psal. 121. 8.]* By
whose Bounty we enjoy this whole World of Crea-
tures, which were created for our use and service,
and made to Minister, not only to our Necessities,
but to our lawful Pleasures too, and innocent
Delight ; The Lord that sits on the Throne of
highest Glory, surrounded with thousands of Angels
that fall down before him and worship him ; the Lord
Jehovah infinite in Power, Majesty, and Goodness, is
the proper Object of a Religious Fear, and Love, and
awful Reverence, and of all outward expressions there-
of in bodily Worship and Adoration, according to that
of the Psalmist in the foregoing Psalm. *O come let us wor-
ship and bow down let us kneel before the Lord our Maker,
[Psal. 95. 6.]*

6 From what hath been said to this first Part I shall
observe these two things,

1. That God ought to be Worshipped.

2. That Worship is due to God alone.

1. That God ought to be Worshipped. This is evi-
dent to any one that hath any Knowledge of God, any
notion of a Divine Being ; For so soon as we think upon
God, and consider the infinite Perfections of His Na-
ture, His glorious Majesty, His unlimited Power, His
inexpressible Goodness, His watchful Providence, and
wise government of the World, we presently apprehend
the certainty of this, that all our Worship and
Adoration is a Tribute justly due to this Almighty So-
vereign, and a necessary acknowledgment of our daily
dependance on him and subordination to him. This

the very Heathens own'd and practis'd, and it will ill become Christians, who have been so much better instructed in their Duty, have had so much clearer discoveries of the adorable Properties and Attributes of the Divine Nature, and have tasted so much more of his grace and goodness, to come behind in any instance of gratitude or Duty ; But I need say no more of this, seeing this is the principal end for which we are here assembled together.

7. II. As Worship is justly due to God, so 'tis a peculiar that is due to him alone ; it may not be communicated to any other ; and the reason is evident, because by every act of Religious Worship, we ascribe Infinite Perfections to the Object that we worship, and confess our own dependance thereon, and this is to exalt it into the place of God ; and God is jealous of his honour. *My Glory I will not give to another, Isa. 42. 8. Thou shalt Worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Matt. 4. 10.*

8. There is a civil respect due to our Parents and Superiors, to Earthly Princes and Governours, who are placed in a higher Orb, and move in a larger Sphere, and derive many blessings to us by their Care and Providence: *Acts 24. 2.* There is a veneration due to good Men, whom God hath distinguish'd by many excellent gifts and graces, which shine forth in them with such an attractive Lustre, as may justly challenge our respect and veneration: The glorious Angels for the dignity of their Nature, and for the Benefits we receive, from their officious Services, *Hebrews. 1. 14.* which they so chearfully perform in Obedience to the Commands of God deserve a due regard and observance from us ; but none of these have any title to our Adoration : They expect it not from us, they disclaim it when ignorantly offer'd them ; *Apoc. 19. 10.* and if we proceed to obtrude it on them, they are provoked and offended at it. They willingly own their constant dependance upon God by their daily Praises and Adorations

rations of him, and it will well become us to follow their example, and joyn with them in the worship of the Lord Almighty, to whom alone Religious Adoration doth belong. This may suffice to be spoken to the first General. *The Duty requir'd.*

9. I proceed to the second. The Direction given by the Prophet *David* for the right performance of it in these Words. *In the Beauty of Holiness.* Which may either have respect to the Place wherein it is to be perform'd, for so the LXX translate it ἐν αὐτῇ ἀγία αὐτοῦ in his holy Court, and so 'tis represented in the Margin of your Bible, in his glorious Sanctuary, the place where he manifests his Glory; or may relate to the Form and Manner of our Worship, and to our decent behaviour and deportment in it, it being highly just and reasonable that in all our Addresses to God, (those more especially we perform in publick) we should demean our selves with such a becoming Decency and Reverence as may testifie the awful Regard we have to his Majesty and Presence. What may be needful for our direction in this weighty matter. I shall branch out into these few following Rules;

10. I. It is necessary that the Publick Worship be perform'd in a decent Place, set apart for that sacred Use. This hath been the Practice of all Nations, and seems to be grounded on the Law of Nature. The Heathens in the darkest times of Idolatry, erected Temples and Altars for them that were no Gods. Before *Moses's* time, the Patriarchs of old worshipp'd not in Houses, but in open Places, and chiefly on some Eminency, on the Tops of Hills, *Gen.* 12. 8. or in some shady Grove; *Gen.* 21. 32. but these were certain and determinate Places, *Gen.* 13. 4. appropriated to that sacred use, and duly resorted to on all Solemn occasions, and were for the most part such as have been signaliz'd by some singular Mercy of God; or lustrated and sanctified by a peculiar Manifestation of his glorious Presence, *Gen.* 12. 7. and 26, 24.

11. In the Wilderuess, a Tabernacle was erected by God's especial Command and Direction, and all necessary Utensils and Ornaments pertaining to that Service, richly provided out of the Free-will Offerings of the People. This was a kind of travelling Temple, suitable to their present State and Condition, who were always in motion, having yet no fixt and settled dwelling Place. There God vouchsafed his Presence, there the Priests administred, and there the Twelve Tribes assembled together for publick Worship. *Exod. 40. 34. Exod. 28. 43. Exod. 33. 7.*

12. When they were settled in the *Land of Heb. 11. 9. Promise*, and had rest from their Enemies *2 Sam. 7. 2.*, round about, *David* the King design'd, *1. Kin. 6. 1. 38.* but his Son *Solomon* by divine Appointment built, a Sumptuous and Magnificent Temple, abounding with rich Vessels of Gold and Silver, and all other things suitable thereunto. The Glory of that Nation, and the Wonder of the World. In this place, which was dedicated to the Service of God with great Solemnity, Sacrifices were offer'd; in this Place the Law was openly read; hither the whole Nation resorted at the Solemn Festivals, and here were daily Prayers at stated Hours, to which devout People gave their Attendance. *Acts. 3. 1. Luke. 2. 47.*

13. Besides this Temple, there were also divers Synagogues in the smaller Cities, where Prayers were offered up at least three Days in the Week, where the Holy Scriptures were read and expounded to the People. *Acts 13. 15.* These, tho' not of *Divine Institution*, yet had the *Divine Approbation*; Christ himself sometimes honouring them with his Presence, and his Apostles frequently resorting to them. *Mat. 4. 23. and c. 9. 35. Acts 9. 20. 6. 13. 5.*

14. At the Beginning of the Gospel, the Believers assembled in secret for fear of the *Jews*, *Job. 20. 19.* for the most part in private Houses, in some Room set apart for that purpose: *Acts 1. 13.* And in the times

times of *Gentile Persecution* they omitted not the *Publick Worship*, tho' they consulted their own Security, and therefore chose out the safest, not the *finest* or *fittest* Places; they often met in crypts or Caves, in vaults and at the Tombs of the Martyrs, where afterwards, as the Heat of Persecution abated, they built Churches, of which there were great Numbers, when the Tyrant *Dioclesian* gave out his *Wicked Edict* for the Demolishing of them. *Euseb. E. H. lib. 8. c. 2.* But so soon as Peace was restored to the Christians in the Reign of *Constantine the Great*, they fell to work with all Speed and Alacrity, to repair the Ruines, to rebuild and enlarge the Old Churches, and to erect New; and this that pious Emperour encourag'd both by * Letter and Example, building some from the Ground at his own Charge, and allowing considerable Sumes to others out of the Publick Treasury.

15. It was the peculiar Glory of that Wise and Puissant Emperour, to Erect and Adorn Churches with a Splendor and Magnificence suitable to the Grandeur of the *Roman Empire*, and to the Largeness of his own Mind He truly thought it a most proper Way of Expressing his Piety, Devotion, and grateful Sence of the *Divine Mercy and Goodness*, to build such Stately and Sumptuous Edifices for the *Worship and Service* of God, and to furnish them with Rich and Costly Utensils and Ornaments, for the more decent and Splendid Ministration. His Liberality in this kind was so profuse, as caused those wicked Instruments, whom *Julian* the Apostate sent to plunder these Sacred Places, to stand in admiration at the Number and Costlyness of them. *Behold*, said they blaspheming, *what manner of Vessels the Son of Mary is served in.*

16 From that time forward, wheresoever the Christian Religion was propagated, Places for Publick Wor-

* Extat Epistola Constantine M. ad Eusebium Palaestinum. Apud Theod. H. Ec. l. 1. c. 10. & ipsam Eusebium de Vita Constant. lib. 2. c. 45.

ship have been erected and endow'd, supported and maintained, beautified and adorned by the Devotion of the People. In some dark Ages they were encourag'd to this by an Opinion of Merit by it; and were taught to believe they might purchase to themselves a Place in Heaven, by their assisting to the building of an House for God on Earth; And on this Principle were most of the Churches in these Kingdoms built in Times of Popery.

17. But, God be praised! there want not Instances of such like pious Works since the Reformation, done upon better Principles; An equal Zeal, accompanied with more Knowledge, and abstracted from all base and mercenary Ends, hath given Birth and Being to many excellent Structures, erected for the Publick and Pure Worship of the True God, and to the Honour of his Holy Name; amongst which, *This* in which we are now Assemb'ed, deserves our Gratulations.

18 Blessed be God for putting it into the Heart of that Worshipful Benefactor, who first form'd this Design, at least set in motion by that noble Legacy he bequeath'd toward it! And blessed be all those Honorable and Worthy Persons who so chearfully concurr'd to the promoting and finishing of it! Their pious Zeal, their watchful Care and Industry, deserve our hearty Applause and Commendation, whether we consider their Liberality in their plentiful Contributions, or their Wisdom in the prudent Management of the same; the one is Visib'e in the Elegancy of this Noble Structure, the other in the matchless Celerity and dispatch of it; Both beyond our Expectation, and without Example.

19. And surely it must be in the Wishes of every pious and devout Soul, that this Church thus fitted up and finished, may be of Daily Use and Resort; that the Publick Worship may be daily celebrated in it. Is it fit that such a Place as This, so decently accommodated for the Service of God, should be shut up, and stand useless, as a Spectacle to be gazed at, for the greatest

part of our time? This is far from the Intent of those Religious Persons, by whose Bounty it was rais'd; They design'd it for a Temple of God, *an House of Prayer*, for a Place of Publick and daily Worship; and I hope the same pious Zeal by which it was erected, will find out some means of Provision to support the daily Service in it; So shall this Work of your Hands (as the Apostle affirms of all the Workmanship of God) *be sanctified by the word of God and Prayer*, 1. Tim. 4. 5. and be made an acceptable Offering to the most High, as well as a standing Memorial of your Piety, and a Blessing to this Parish throughout all succeeding Generations.

20. II. That the Publick Worship of God be perform'd in a decent manner, with respect to the Presence of God, and the greatness of his Majesty. And here in the first place, 'tis obvious to every Man's understanding, that laboureth not under some invincible Prejudice, that a Set stated Form of Prayer doth very much conduce to the Decency of Publick Worship; and is on that account highly preferable to sudden and extemporary Effusions, in which 'tis scarce possible for the most wary and most expert to avoid all Absurdity.

Besides, that this Practice gives too much Countenance to a wild Supposition, and far distant from the Nature of God, as if he were better pleas'd with a new Change of Words, and variety of Expression.

21. The General and Publick Wants of the Church, for which we beg a Supply in our daily Prayers, are every day the same; and the general Mercies of God conferr'd upon his Church, which require our daily Thanksgivings, are still the same; and the Adorable Perfections of the Divine Nature, which command our daily Praises, change not. If then our Petitions, Praises and Thanksgivings, be every day the same in substance, why may they not be put up in the same form of Words? why should we vary the Expression when the Matter is the same? Is it not more suitable to the Nature, and consequently more agreeable to the Will
of

of God ; and is not the decency of Worship much better secur'd by it when we address to him in a wise and deliberate Choice of proper Expressions in a set Form, than if our Prayers were dress'd up every Day in different Language, according to the Genius and Fancy of the Person that officiates, where there can be neither that fulness of Comprehension, nor Concinnity of Method, nor Propriety of Expression.

22. And as God is more honour'd, so is the Congregation better Edified in the use of a Set Form of Prayer, than in any sudden Raptures or indigested Conceptions 1 Cor. 14. 12. 26. and Edification is principally to be regarded in our Religious Assemblies. And in this respect the establish'd Liturgy of our Church deserves a particular Commendation ; it being as a Learned Divine hath observ'd, (Dr. Cumber,) ' So judiciously contriv'd, that the wisest may exercise at once ' their Knowledge and Devotion ; and yet so plain, ' that the most Ignorant may pray with understanding ; so full, that nothing is omitted, that is fit to be ' ask'd in Publick ; So particular, that it compriseth ' most things which we could pray for in private ; and ' yet not so long as to tire out any that have true Devotion, the variety and change of Parts taking off from the tediousness of the whole. In this well compos'd Form, we have Instructions in our Duty, as well as Prayers for our Wants, and both these for the most part in the very Words of Scripture, and the Language of the Holy Ghost ; insomuch that this Apostolical Rule is most exactly observ'd with us ; for *we may pray with the Spirit, and pray with the Understanding also.* 1 Cor. 14, 15.

23. It is much to be lamented, that there should be any amongst us so far prejudic'd against the Excellent Form of Prayer, as to refrain from the use of it for Conscience sake ; but 'tis more grievous to consider what numbers there are amongst us that have no such Prejudices, and yet rarely appear at the publick Worship, they have

have no Relish of this Spiritual Duty, no Appetite after it ; their Minds are so possess'd with the Vanities of this World, and their Hearts harden'd with Prophane-ness: And it is chiefly to be wish'd, that all those who do resort to these Sacred places, and are frequently present at our publick Prayers, would joyn in them with more Devotion, and behave themselves more Reverently in the House of God. And this leads to the third and last Rule.

24. III. That we duly frequent the publick Worship, and behave our selves with Decency and Devotion in it. Thus shall we *Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness*. As a Royal Court appears with greater Honour and Splendour from the multitude of Attendants there; so is the Church in its greatest Glory and Beauty, when filled with humble Supplicants: A thin appearance at the Publick Worship is a Dishonour to the God whom we serve, and argues in us a Contempt of Religious Ordinances. The zeal of the Primitive Christians in this Case well deserves our Imitation; they left their Secular Business, they forsook their sports and pastimes, to attend upon the publick VVorship, where the Concourse was so great, that their *Amen* at the close of their Prayers echoed in the Church like a Clap of Thunder, as *St. Jerome* witnesseth. * And surely no Man that considers how necessary the Blessing of God is to the successful progress of all his Affairs, can think his time mispent in suing for it, especially in the publick Congregation where every single Breath adds power and prevalency to our Petitions: Neither can any wise and rational Person prefer his vain pastime, or the gaities of the most entertaining Conversation, before these blessed opportunities of Conversing with God, and bearing part with the glorious Company of Saints and Angels in the praises and adorations of the Holy Trinity.

* *Prem. in 2. lib. Com. in Galat.*

25. The consideration of God's peculiar Presence in this Place should also engage us to a decent and devout Behaviour in it. For, what the Patriarch *Jacob* said of that place where he had seen a Vision of Angels, may most properly be affirm'd of This, that, *This is no other than the House of God; this is the Gate of Heaven*, Gen. 28. 17. It concerns us therefore to compose our Minds to seriousness and Devotion, and to banish out of our Thoughts all vain and loose Imaginations at our first Entrance into this sacred Place, and to support the same devout Frame of Spirit throughout the whole Course of these Religious Exercises, by an intent Application to them in their several Parts and Offices, carefully avoiding all those Diversions which a wandering Eye, or a greedy Ear is too often ensnared with. Seriousness is a Quality well becoming Christians in the whole Course of their Conversation; but is of absolute Necessity in the Worship of God; who, as he requir'd under the Law the Sacrifices to be *perfect and without blemish*, Levit. 22. 20. Deut. 15. 21. so hath he commanded us under the Gospel to *lift up holy hands in prayer*; 1. Tim. 2. 18. to *pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit*; Eph. 6. 18. and to *watch thereunto with all perseverance*; John 4. 24. and to *worship God in Spirit and Truth*; that is, with purity of Mind and Heart.

26. Without this inward Qualification of Truth and Purity, all our Devotions are meer Pagentry and Pretence; Without this, our solemn Meeting for Religious Worship instead of promoting the Honour of God, will tend to his manifest Contempt and Dishonour. And 'tis a sacrilegious Profanation of this holy Place, thus to transform the *House of Prayer* into a Theatre of Secular Pomp and Pride or into an *House of Merchandice*, and a *Den of Thieves*. John 2. 16. Mat. 21. 13. And what greater Indignity can we offer to God? What greater Injury can we do to our selves, than

than thus to pervert the End of our Religious Meeting? and instead of Reconciling the Favour of God to us by our Joynt-supplikations, to incense and provoke him by our indecent Behaviour in his presence.

27. And, now to draw toward a Conclusion, let me entreat you to look back, and reflect a little on what hath been said. You have heard that Worship is a Tribute due to God, and proper to Him alone; That to render our Worship acceptable to him, it must be perform'd *in the Beauty of Holiness*: that is to say, in a Publick and Consecrated Place, in a decent and regular manner, and by a constant Attendance with devout Affections of Mind, and with Reverential Deportment of Body. The first of these hath been provided by our Ancestours, by whom this place was first set apart for Publick Worship, and when it was decay'd and ruinous, hath been renew'd, rebuilt, enlarg'd, made more Commodious, and more Beautiful by your pious Care and Conduct. The Second is taken care of by the Church; and we can challenge the whole Christian World to produce so Compleat and Unexceptionable a Form of Publick VVorship, as the Establish'd Liturgy; so agreeable to the Ancient and Earliest Forms that were of use in the Primitive Church. The Third is still incumbent upon our selves; It must be our Work and Endeavour to pay a constant Attendance to all the Holy Offices performed in this Place; to bring with us devout Affections; and to demean our selves with becoming Gravity in this House of Prayer. This the Majesty of that God whom we adore requires; this, the Care of our selves, that our Petions may be heard and granted, will exact. To this we are bound by the common Rules of Decency and Respect to those that are met together to joyn with us in these Holy Ministrations. To which let me add in the last place, the Obligation we lye under from the Consideration of our Redemption; of which St.

Paul

Paul reminds us in his Former Epistle to the Corinthians,
 Ch. 6. v. 20. *Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify
 God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's.*

*To the Immortal, Invisible God, Father, Son, and Holy
 Ghost, be ascribed by the Church (as is most due) the King-
 dom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. A-
 men.*

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